

**FLATHEAD COUNTY LONG RANGE PLANNING TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14th, 2006**

Members Present	Members Absent	Others
Gary Hall Jeff Harris Charlie Johnson Cathy Roberts (alternate for Don Hines) Mike Pence Marsha Sheffels Diana Blend Kerry Finley Jane Leivo Murt Webb Chuck Roady	Jed Fisher Dennis Hester Mike Meehan Joe Russell Tom Jentz Jim Patrick Bob Horne Velvet Phillips-Sullivan Bill Shaw Turner Askew Karen Reeves Richard Surynt Pam Kennedy	

Call to Order

- Meeting called to order at 4:05 p.m.

Roll Call Attendance

- Diana Blend expressed concern that we did not have enough members for a quorum. We may have to hold off on action.
- Murt Webb suggested that since we just pass along recommendations (because we aren't approving money or laws) can't we just vote
- Gary Hall asked if everyone was in agreement that we review the document and pass the agreement. All were in favor. None opposed.

Agenda Approval

- Diana proposed we changed agenda to close meeting at 5:45, since there was another meeting starting at 6:00. All agreed.

August and June Minutes Approval

- August minutes approved with exception of Jeff Harris being placed as BJ Grieve under Members Present

Old Business

New Business

Briefing on Growth Policy - Jeff Harris

- Growth Policy is at the planning board level right now.
- Substantial public comment (500 pages) received.
- Staff responded to every comment.
- Draft was submitted with a report of public comment to planning board.
- We had tentatively scheduled a very aggressive time frame so we could get this to the county by 10/1. That was overly aggressive, the Planning Board has chosen a different path – and that is to review it in detail, so they will not meet the October first deadline. Deadline is undetermined at this time. It could take as many as 8 more work sessions to get through the document. Then they will vote on whether or not they accept the document as amended or not. They will forward their recommendation on to the county commissioner.
- Master plan amendments, zone changes, creation of zone districts, etc. cannot be approved until the Growth Policy is finalized.
- Can continue to process variance requests (hardship) and conditional use permits as long as they fit with in the current zoning use plan.
- Cathy Roberts has gone through the entire draft and edited it.

Gary Hall: One of the concerns of the commission is that we can't move forward until this growth policy is accepted. Some requests expire and have to reapply because of the 60 day deadline. Detailed maps are needed, this is agreed, however, this can take some time (up to a year) to develop. If we don't get this pushed through, we may end up in court for many of the requests that are submitted. Not a good service to the community.

Myrt: This effort has been insufficiently supported from the get go. There should be a couple hundred thousand bucks dedicated to get this thing done. All we have is a shell document which is ok if the detail plans are going to come within the next 6 months or so.

Charlie Johnson: How much more has the planning board added to this based on the statute.

Cathy: I don't think it is the planning board. One of the complaints was that you have to get the public involved. We do, and they requested things that involved changes to the statute.

Charlie: If we don't meet the deadline we have the developers up in arms. I would like to see this move along as fast as possible. We're going to end up in scorched earth policy here if we don't get this done when we said we would.

Gary: Let's hope for the best.

Presentation on County Budget – Mike Pence

Commissioners approved the budget this morning. We appreciate the chance to review the budget with this committee.

The past two years – the focus has been to try to improve cash balance situation, reducing expenditure appropriation items. One operating budget in the court system – legal defense went over. Everyone else stayed under.

- Build up cash reserves and cash balances.

- Develop a cap improvement program county wide.
- In the past we had a couple of depts. Who had put together good cap improvement plans – solid waste. But haven't had a comprehensive county wide. So we obtained a 35k grant to assist us (consultant 32K) with putting a cap improvement program together. We'll work with each individual dept who needs to be a part of this process. This will be a major effort, and will be a great tool. What I envision is look at a 20 year spreadsheet, and cover any of the needs coming up in that period of time and then estimate costs and tuck away those funds each year. The commissioners have to buy into it. The first dollar we budget will be for the capital project.
- Number of personnel is the major part of the budget appropriation – 500 employees. 3.4% cost of living increases proposed. Particularly with lower paid employees, the cost of living increase does not keep up with the markets. So we made some adjustments to compensate the lower paid positions over 3.4%. We need to equalize wages as we've had huge turnover and we hope this will help to stabilize the work force.
- Request for additional personnel. Newer positions were funded by fees and not property taxes (2 approved this year, even though a freeze was held). Fees don't cover the cost for the long term plan.
- This year the commissioners did allow for 9.6 new FTE positions. Five of which will be funded from property taxes.
- Capital request: Capital Improvement Project (CIP). \$5.7 million was requested. The commissioners approved \$4.6 million dollars. Of that, the solid waste dept accounted for \$2.8 million. Along with road, these are the 2 big CIP programs.
- Impact to taxpayers will be a 3.84% increase in total mill levy. So on a \$150,000 market value home, the increase would be almost \$16.

Kerry: Who did you hire for the CIP contract?

Mike Pence: Meral Gamradt. He was selected from 3 firms. He was a past financial director and did an award winning capital improvement plan for the city of Bozeman and also received awards for municipal budget presentations. It will take about four months to complete the project. We have the information; we just need to identify sources of funding, resources, big capital projects (admin, jail, etc.).

Myrt: It is essential we do this so we can take care of some of these important needs. It's good to see that Mike and the commissioner has been able to get this started. Appreciated, thanks!

Review and act on Pathway Report /Recommendations from Transportation Committee – Myrt Webb

Myrt: Diana asked the transportation committee to make recommendations on the county pathway system. So essentially, Dennis and I put this together with some input from other people. One of the things we could do with a successful pathway system is reduce the amount of traffic.

We cannot make a plan that shows every single pathway. So we propose a backbone system that can be hooked into. Have the backbone system not near heavy traffic areas. All other areas could feed into it.

We should have recreational path along the rivers. We may not have right-of-way for this, but we do have the right-of-ways along the major arterials.

Gary: Commends Myrt for his work in Columbia Falls trail system. Webb Crossing was named in honor of his efforts here.

Myrt: We need to get a funding source. We need action from the state legislature. Recommend that we levy taxes, for development and maintenance.

Diana: Are the pathways part of the road or set aside from the road.

Charlie: There should be separation of the asphalt - green space between the road and the pathway.

Gary: There are very few sections where right of way is not considered for bike paths. Trying to prepare for the future.

Myrt: One of the things we are criticized for is that we want right of way but we don't have a plan. This is the start of the plan. Now we have an answer that we can communicate.

Charlie made a motion that we accept as transportation plan and pass along to commissioners. Jane Leivo seconded. All were in favor

Staggered Terms for Members At Large

Gary: When we first formed this committee, I didn't think about staggered terms. This was brought to my attention by Diana and others. I've been working with Dennis Hester on this. His recommendation was that we need to:

- 1) Have the commissioners determine the staggering terms. Basically taking the citizen members and put their names in the hat and randomly draw out two for a 3 year term, two for a two year term and two for a 1 year term. Realizing that this does not apply to department heads, who are lifetime members. You can send alternates. We drew lots and we've established the staggered terms.
- 2) Have to have a resolution and the come back to this board for a vote to amend the task force bylaws to incorporate the staggered terms. If someone gets a three year term and only wants to server for a shorter time, with a letter of resignation we will advertise the position and refill it.

3 year terms: Jane Leivo, Myrt Webb. 2 year terms: Karen Reeves, Chuck Roady. 1 year terms: Richard Surynt, Diana Blend

If someone wishes to resign, consider carefully, and send a letter to the commissioners.

Jeff: City members are usually absent – whereas citizen members are not.

Gary: This is an awesome experience. We are part of history in the making. It has not been well attended by the cities. Maybe it's because it's a struggle to have a close relationship

with the municipalities. I don't know what to do about it. I'm proposing to take from Oct to Jan – give everyone a break. I want to keep this group together. It was established was to because of a lack of long range planning in the Flathead County. It has worked well for those who have participated. I look to you for a recommendation on how to get better attendance. I work continuously to have relationships with the cities.

Diana: Brainstorming – what if a couple of representatives who live in each city – set up a lunch with our members and ask them why they haven't been able to attend, ask them what we can do to garner their attention and incorporate the interests.

Marsha Sheffels: Speaking for Bob Horne, we were in a meeting until after 11:00 last night. Maybe people don't have the time.

Gary: Counties are doing their own planning, cities do their own. With this task force, we are trying to bring these groups together again.

Gary: Subcommittees could meet monthly and the Task Force could meet quarterly. We need to continue this discussion. In our October meeting, not only do we need to discuss another growth plan update, but also be prepared to submit a name for a new chairman. And that chairman would take the reigns in January.

Mike: Trying to establish an impact fee committee. We didn't get anyone from the development community to apply.

Gary: Surprised at the lack of names submitted. We didn't do a good enough job of letting people know.

Task Force Member Comment Period

Myrt: I read the paper this morning. Conservation easements and transfer development rights got tossed. A good topic for the October agenda. Discussion about property rights, conversation easements and TDR rights. Seldom is there a specific description of what this really means. It's an important discussion to have.

Cathy: Property rights - we need a concrete definition to put in the growth policy.

Diana: Thinking about bringing in a developer who has some excellent ideas who has excellent ideas about what can be done in the valley. Might be good food for thought so we can decide what kinds of projects we have in the valley.

Public Comment Period

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:43